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The man in the moon



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THE MAN IN THE MOON.

A POEM.

PART THE FIRST.

BY AN UNDERGRADUATE

OF WORCESTER COLLEGE, OXFORD,
OF THE INNER TEMPLE, AND OF GRAY'S INN, LONDON.

THE SECOND EDITION.

OXFORD: J. B. ROSS, 1849.

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THE MAN IN THE MOON.

PART THE FIRST.

I.

THE Man in the Moon! why came he down

From his peaceful realm on high ;

Where sorrowful moan is all unknown,

And nothing is born to die ?

The Man in the Moon was tired, it seems,

Of living so long in the land of dreams ;

'Twas a beautiful sphere, but nevertheless,

Its lunar life was passionless.

Unchequer'd by sorrow, undimm'd by crime,

Untouched by the wizard wand of time.

10

'Twas all too good—there was no scope

For dread, and of course no room for hope :

To him the future had no fear,

To make the present doubly dear ;

The day no cast of coming night,

To make the borrow'd ray more bright ;

And life itself no thought of death,

To sanctify the boon of breath—

In short, as we world-people say,

The Man in the Moon was ennuyé.

20

II.

And of late dim visions, like the seent
Of flowers unseen, that reach the brain,
Had with his dreams comingling lent
A pleasure, half of which was pain ;
For they told of a fair and distant sphere
Which drank of his beams below,
Where joy and sorrow—smile and tear,
And those twin sisters, hope and fear,
Hand link'd in hand did go.
And oh! he cried, 'twere a lovely world, 30
For one like me to view,
Where pleasure's eyes are thus impearl'd
By sorrow's gentle dew ;
Where flowers but fade, and daylight sets,
To beam and bloom again,
And every infant Joy forgets
So soon its parent—Pain.
The glad sun lighteth, as of old,
This orb'd hall of mine,
With crystal floor, and roof of gold, 40
And columns argentine ;
And here are fountains purer far
Than aught of earthly hue,
With flowers fair as any star,
And as immortal too :
But yet methinks 'twere sweet to scan,
This darkling dwelling-place of man,

Where chance and change are rife,
To leave awhile this long repose, 50
And mark, and mingle with the woes
And joys of human life—

III.

Sweet shone the light of the moon that night,
In the absence of the sun,
And out her fair handmaiden stars
Came following one by one.
And here and there some fleecy cloud,
Hung midway like an isle,
Seeming to say to each earthward ray,
Come rest thee here awhile. 60
And beautiful beneath the calm,
One half of earth was sleeping,
Albeit her face still bore a trace,
Of vespers early weeping.
In sooth she look'd so calm, so bright,
So pure—you scarce could deem
That happiness there was a thing of air,
And hope itself a dream.
On such an eve the lunar Sprite
Toward our planet flew, 70
And where he went—the firmament
Seem'd dyed in deeper blue.
That night full many a mortal eye,
On heaven's vault did dwell,
Some mark'd afar a falling star,
But none saw where it fell.

IV.

It fell upon a lovely isle,
Girt by the azure sea,
Full oft, the spirit cried, my smile
Hath fallen upon thee. 80
And now I come from thee to learn
Each passion-thought which may not burn
Within my breast above ;
Be mine the joy, the hope, the fear,
The smile of pleasure, pity's tear,
And poetry of love.

V.

From his brow he has ta'en the silver wreath,
And folded his pinions bright,
As the beetle shuts in their ebon sheath,
Its inner wings at night. 90
He hath quench'd the pearly light that play'd
Through each transparent limb,
As cloudlets oft the moon o'ershade,
The change o'ershadow'd him.
He hath veil'd his form in earthly weed,
Like to a child of clay,
Self-taught to shun what might impede
The tenor of his way.

THE MAN IN THE MOON.

7

And scarce had morning oped her lid,
 When he came to a city old, 100
 What there he saw, and what he did,
 Remaineth to be told.

VI.

Within that city scarce a thing
 Yet told of man's awakening ;
 The air was still—and overhead
 The hov'ring mist was fleck'd with red ;
 So faint, so frail, you scarce could say
 Where 'gan the rose, where fled the gray—
 But quick the dawn, with feet of flame,
 Along the flush'd horizon came, 110
 And as she leapt with beacon fire,
 Lighting the vane of many a spire,
 Each, as the lustre onward flew,
 Like Memnon's statue, vocal grew ;
 From thousand mouths Time's iron tongue
 Forth on the startled silence rung,
 Telling that truth, too soon forgot,
 That while man slumbers—he doth not.

VII.

As ceas'd the chime, the Spirit heard
 A rustling sound of one who stirr'd 120
 From sleep—'twas only where
 Some Lazarus, who slumber'd late,

Beneath the porch of Dives' gate,
 Had rous'd him from his lair.
 The clock's shrill voice, the morning beam,
 Had driven from his brain a dream
 As sweet as e'er was shed
 O'er martyr's couch—for in the sleep
 Which o'er him hunger-born did creep,
 He dreamt that he was dead— 130
 He remember'd the cold and biting air
 And gaunt disease, and pain,
 Hunger, and thirst, and long despair,
 And life itself—as things that were,
 But ne'er should be again.
 And up and up his spirit flies,
 Heaven's holy gate to win ;
 E'en now its splendour fills his eyes,
 Hark ! angels sing within.
 The gate is won—the vagrant woke 140
 Beside the rich man's door ;
 The morning had already broke,
 And the bell was chiming four.

VIII.

The wond'ring Spirit turn'd to scan
 The spot whence came the sound ;
 A human shape—an aged man,
 With palsied limbs, and features wan,
 Rose ghostlike from the ground.

The Spirit gazed upon his face
With a long and anxious look, 150
Each hidden thought he there could trace,
And read as in a book ;
But as he mark'd the blotted page
Where tears had branded deep
That fleshly scroll—from youth to age—
He turn'd himself to weep—
For back that chronicle of time
Went through forgotten years,
An age of want, a youth of crime,
An infancy of tears. 160
Back went that register of woe,
Through many a sorrow past ;
The word of scorn, the wanton blow,
And infamy at last.
It spoke of soul alike and limb
Bow'd down by prison chain,
Of Hope once felt—but who for him
Must never wake again.
It told of a heart which might have been
A thing for God to own, 170
Ere yet the foul enchanter, Sin,
Had turn'd it into stone—
Ere yet it hardened 'neath the frown
That wealth can lend the weak—
I said that tears were flowing down
The pitying angel's cheek—
And if perchance you ask of me
The reason why they fell,

Methinks the Spirit wept to see
Such anguish out of hell.

180

IX.

And oh! he cried, is this the earth
For which I dared to pine ;
And deem'd such pangs upon it—worth
The peacefulness of mine!
One step below yon angel sphere
Man made by God I ween'd ;
Nor guess'd that guilt had left him here
But one above the fiend—
And thou unfortunate—he said,
Go get thee to that narrow bed
Where the world-weary sleep.
Where'er thy waking lot be cast,
A worse, a wearier than the last,
Thou scarce canst have to weep.

190

X.

That day at noon twelve men were met
By the corpse of a vagrant old :
They talk'd of the weather—some prophesied wet,
And some predicted cold—
A coroner came—and talk'd as erst
Of life's uncertain span,
And then desired the jury first
To view the lifeless man ;

200

They saw where the teeth of famine and frost
Had pinch'd the wrinkled skin,
Till its shrunken fold could scarcely hold
The skeleton frame within.
They saw the mark upon his brow,
Where the hoof of the fiend had trod,
And they turn'd and said that the man was dead,
By the visitation of God. 210

XI.

Meanwhile the gath'ring sound of feet
Rose frequent o'er the peopled street ;
And like a summer hive,
When wakes at once the busy swarm,
With thousand shapes of human form,
The city seem'd alive.
Fondly the Spirit had dreamt above,
Of youth and beauty wed to love,
And thron'd in features fair ;
He sought their seraph home to trace, 220
In ev'ry passing form and face ;
But youth alone was there—
Boyhood was there, without its glee,
And youth without its prime,
And the strength of manhood seemingly
Grown old before its time.
And woman's pale and sickly cheek
Bent like a blossom down,
Which grows in pride by the wild wood side,
But droops within the town. 230

XII.

Oh, not by creatures like to this
The olden world was trod,
When man went proudly o'er the earth,
The counterpart of God!
Nearer in your descent were ye,
From that immortal sire,
Who throng'd the halls of Nineveh,
Or dwelt in lordly Tyre.
Or ye on whose array I shone,
A noon and summer night,
When by the vale of Ajalon
Ye chas'd the Amorite.

240

XIII.

So deem'd the Spirit as he pass'd
Beneath an ample shade,
Where rose on either side the street,
A winding colonnade.
Beyond, a lofty column stood,
Within an open space,
The statue of some warrior bold
Was at the top—a woman old
Was weeping at the base ;
But as the Spirit nearer came,

250

She rais'd her wrinkled brow,
Tell me, he ask'd her, why they rear
Yon warrior's tomb or trophy here,
And wherefore weepest thou ?

XIV.

I mourn not him, the woman cried,
Who standeth overhead ;
I mourn not him, albeit by tears
Are falling for the dead. 260
The rich have sorrow'd for the rich,
They rear'd yon idle stone ;
The poor have nought but tears, and they
Must keep them for their own.
I seek not here the memory
Of battles lost or won ;
Nor come I here to curse the dead,
As many might have done.
I ask not vengeance here from God,
For that is His alone ;
I only ask the hand of man,
To give me back my own.

* * * * *

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XV.

Ah me, said the Spirit, methinks the best trophy
A nation could build o'er the dust of the brave, 310
Were a mound of fresh turf, with the laurel around it,
So that Gratitude only wept over his grave.

Tears shed for the hero, are pure as the dewdrops
Hung over each leaf by the moon-loving elves ;
But alas for the wreath, when its leaves are o'erladen
By mourners who weep—not for him—but themselves—

Disgrac'd is the tomb, and dishonour'd the trophy,
'Twas built to his glory, but stands for his shame ;
And foiled is the pride of the founders, who ventured
To take from his honour to add to his fame. 320

The smile of the widow, the prayers of the orphan,
The tear of affection—can hallow a clod ;
But curs'd is the marble, how costly soever,
When Justice appeals from the dead unto God.

But they should forgive who would fain be forgiven,
For those who have wrong'd thee forget not to pray ;
And thy words shall be read in the record of heaven,
When column and statue have crumbled away.

XVI.

As if she heard an angel speak,
The woman bent her knee ; 330
Her lips were motionless—but there
The Spirit saw the voiceless prayer
Ascending silently.
At first, most like an angel child,
Scarce yet to being reconcil'd,
It seem'd afraid to soar ;
But soon on seraph wings elate,
Swift as a dove that seeks its mate,
It clomb the path towards heaven's gate,
And then was seen no more. 340

XVII.

The day was young, and scarce on high
One fleecy speck was strown ;
And from his palace in the sky,
A type of God's all-seeing eye,
The sun look'd down alone.
He gaz'd on many a lordly dome,
On many a temple old,
And dwelt upon the waveless stream,
Dyeing its breast with gold.
All things beneath him lovelier grew, 350
To pleasure's self a brighter hue
Was by his presence lent.

He lit the cloudy cheek of care,
 He smooth'd the brow of rash despair,
 And made e'en want, forgetful, wear
 The semblance of content.
 And like a messenger that's bound
 E'en to the dead to go,
 Piercing the richly-storied pane
 Of many a legend-haunted fane,
 He cast a dim uncertain stain
 Upon the tomb below,

360

XVIII.

But enough of the dead : their graves are dug
 Too deep for joy or sorrow ;
 One only morn for them may dawn,
 A morn without a morrow.
 To-day the world is clothed in light ;
 To-day the cloudless skies are bright ;
 Then onward hie, thou lunar sprite,
 No more in sadness.
 Albeit, as yet the sigh and tear
 Have been thy sole companions here,
 Now mark if this our lower sphere
 Hath nought of gladness.

370

XIX.

As rolls the surging river tide
 Along its lessening bank ;

THE MAN IN THE MOON.

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As onward in their order'd pride
Sweep armies rank by rank ;
E'en thus, as if one common soul
Leaven'd instinctively the whole 380
Of its unnumber'd throng,
Towards one point, on either side,
The crowd, in columns deep and wide,
Like billows of the restless tide
Of life seem'd roll'd along.
Like a boat unmann'd and rudderless,
The Spirit felt the onward stress,
But while he sped between
Those living waves, he only heard
One sound, by which all lips were stirr'd— 390
One worshipp'd name—one echoed word—
One thought—the Queen—the Queen.

XX.

With that he turn'd from out the crowd,
And gain'd a passage dim,
Where he might cast the earthy shroud
Which overshadow'd him.

XXI

As when in the summer-time Psyche has crept
From the chrysalis tomb where in winter she slept ;
E'en thus in one moment the spell-word was spoken,
From each limb of the Spirit earth's fetters were broken.

Disembodied he stood, as fair and as frail 401
 As a moonbeam incarnate—while o'er him a veil
 Was spread of that mist which encircles the moon
 When sphered she walks the mid heaven of June.

XXII.

Alas, for the sorrow!—alas, for the crime
 Which came o'er the world in the youngness of time!
 Alas, for the deed that was done at our birth,
 It has blinded for ever the children of earth!
 Woe, woe to the garden where knowledge was rife,
 And mingled its boughs with the branches of life! 410
 And woe to the pluckers—ah, why did they shun
 To hazard for both what they ruin'd for one!
 Accurs'd be that knowledge, for ever, which came
 And open'd our eyes but to show us our shame.
 No more may the world be in holiness trod
 By ignorance pure in the presence of God;
 No more may the eye in its innocence scan
 Those angels that link the Almighty to man;
 They wait on our steps while the day-beam is bright;
 They haunt the dim couch in the silence of night; 420
 And as flowers are nurs'd by the soft-falling rain,
 They cherish each holy thought born in the brain.
 But the curse is upon us—the fruit of the tree
 Forbiddeth the sinful the sinless to see;
 The brain is o'ershadow'd full oft by a gleam
 Of thoughts too immortal, too bright for a dream;

The heart itself owneth a presence as fair,
But the eye knoweth not that an angel is there.

XXIII.

So fared it with the lunar Sprite—
For onward as he flew 430
Nought, save the sun's all-seeing light,
Its angel brother knew.
Thou hast mark'd the phantom ray that flies
From the mirror's orb'd glass,
When, clad like a maiden, mischief tries,
Now here, now there, to dazzle the eyes
Of all who chance to pass.
Such was the track of the Spirit's flight,
For thought too speedy, for eye, too bright.
And oh, quoth he, I look'd on the tear, 440
And thought 'twas the only inhabitant here.
And I deem'd that sorrow, and want, and crime,
Were the only plants that grew in the clime ;
But I see in yon faces that hope and love
Can blossom on earth as well as above ;
And I ask no guide, but her people's smile,
To show me where dwelleth the Queen of the Isle.

XXIV.

Away, thou unsuspecting Sprite,
From the passion-haunted clime ;

Oh, spread thy fair wings for flight,
 And backward, ere the birth of night,
 Where beams thine orb of virgin white,
 Go wander while there's time.
 Thou hadst nought to fear from the sigh and the tear,
 But if now thy quest be bliss,
 Go seek it afar, in some passionless star,
 But have nothing to do with this.
 Oh, heavenward haste, while yet thou mayst,
 Remember the tale of old.
 How the fond moth came to the taper's flame, 460
 And burnt his wings of gold.
 Remember the tale still told above,
 How seraphs left their sphere.
 Would'st share the thrall that wrought their fall?
 Thou need'st but enter here—
 For the Queen has sent her summons forth,
 And bade before her stand,
 From east to west, from south to north,
 The fairest of the land.
 And there they throng around her now, 470
 In yon ancestral pile,
 The high of birth, the fair of brow,
 The daughters of the isle.

XXV.

As mark'd the Sprite the rays of light,
 Each crystal casement gem,
 Thought he—by their shine they are brothers of mine,
 I may enter along with them.

A brighter gleam, a phantom beam,
Around the chamber shore,
As swift he thro' the casement flew, 480
And stood beside the throne.

XXVI.

Oh, beauty is a sacred dower,
So virtue round it cling ;
And youth, when linked thus to power,
Becomes a holy thing.
And never yet have the triad met
More smilingly than there,
In yon sweet girl, with a wreath of pearl
Around her braided hair.

XXVII.

Oh, Monarch Love ! enthron'd above, 490
A prayer I pray to thee :
By the silver sheen of Hippocrene,
And the gush of Castalie ;
By the laurell'd shrine of the Muses nine,
And the Graces' choral braid,
And the fierce control that rent the soul
Of the shrieking Pythian maid ;
Be mine the spell whose anguish fell
On Sappho's heart and brain ;
Welcome shall be that agony, 500
If with it wake the strain.

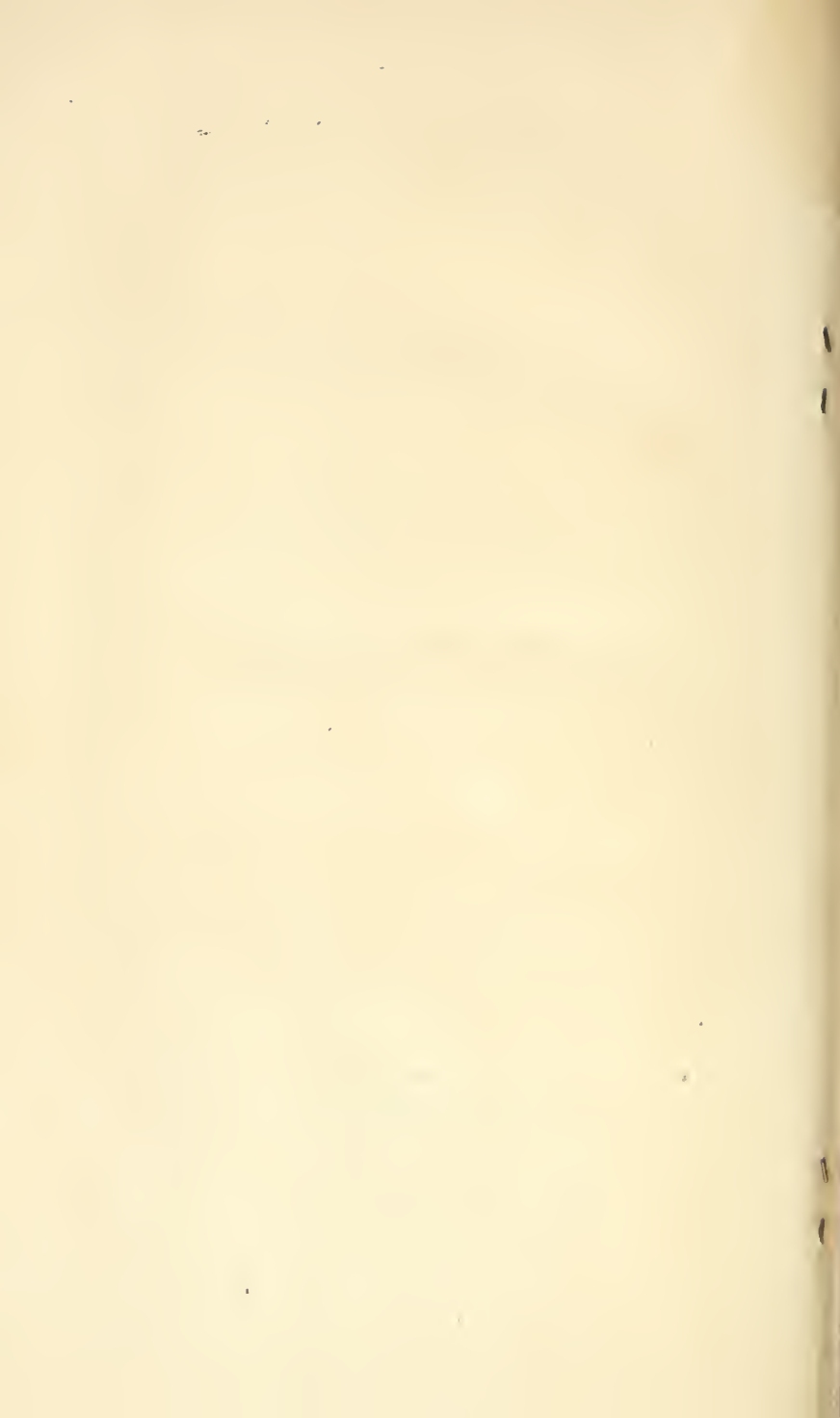
Oh give me the tongue of him who sung
 In beauty's praise of old,
 Thine own lov'd son, Anacreon,
 With lyre of laughing gold.
 Like her I bow before thee now ;
 Like him I bend the knee ;
 Then list above, O, Monarch Love !
 The prayer I pray to thee—
 O, let thy lute's neglected frame, 510
 With passion chords of purest flame,
 For me be strung anew ;
 Brood o'er my heart with noiseless wing :
 Breathe o'er my lip—and gently fling
 Thy frenzy there—that I may sing
 The tale of beauty true.

XXVIII.

Thy brow is unwrinkled, O Love, tho' its birth,
 Coeval with heaven, was older than earth ;
 Like a nestling yet callow, thy winglets are furl'd,
 Yet they bear thee unseen o'er the breadth of the world ;
 And say, hast thou met since the birthday of time, 521
 Wherever the country—whatever the clime,
 Since love first awoke under Eden's high trees,
 Earth-shapes that were nearer to heaven than these ?

Thou sawest the forms from that fountain who sprung,
The holy no longer, alas, but the young.
Thou sawest their children—thro' bosom and brain—
Deep smiting the hearts of the daughters of Cain.
Thine, thine were their children, the frail and the fair,
Who blent upon earth with the beings of air ; 530
And thine was that beauty that burden'd the wave,
When death rain'd from heaven, and earth was a grave.

Oh, thine were the eyes which uncloudedly shone
Thro' long after ages in old Babylon ;
And theirs were glad bosoms which beat but for thee,
In the marbled-roof'd dwellings of doom'd Nineveh.
The maidens of Ægypt knelt to thee—and thine
Were the love-stricken virgins of fair Palestine :
Yet say, hast thou ever bent earthward thy brow
On beauty more bright than encircles thee now ? 540



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